THIS DAY IN HISTORY---*By Rea Irvin*

John Greenleaf Whittier Writes "Snowbound," December 17, 1866

The Night Court to Santa Claus

NIGHT court judges don't write letters to Santa Claus, as a rule. They have their dignity to maintain and that of other folks. They don't dare let the public find out that it's only the black robes and the pale electric light that gives them that judicial look.

This year, though, they are vieing with the little Jimmy Jenkinses and Rosie Sadowskys of the East Side in inditing a message to Saint Nick. It isn't a present for themselves that they want, but one that they regard as most important to their work. And——

"Dear Santa Claus," they are scribbling (with law books piled up in front of them to give the impression that they are immersed in study), "please send the Magdalen Home at Inwood $20,000, so that it may keep on mothering the wayward girls of New York. $15,000 of it must be there not later than January 1, 1917."

Of course, no Santa Claus would dare refuse anything so mandatory as a request of a judge for fear of being fined for contempt of court. And so Miss Janet Macconachie, superintendent of the house, Mrs. Mary E. Paddon, its executive secretary, are going ahead with their arrangements for a Christmas party exactly as if they knew where their bread and butter was coming from after January if the public, which is Santa Claus in this case, doesn't respond to the appeal.

A Christmas party at Inwood-on-the-Hudson! A kind of moated castle, you know, American style, crackling fires, holly everywhere, all sorts of carols, and 100 girls, all under 20 years old, as the guests of honor! Doesn't it sound just the most Christmasy thing imaginable to you, in your stuffy apartment or your furnished room? And it is going to be Christmasy; not the less so from the fact that a year ago every girl of the 100 (nearly all under twenty years old) was a pickpocket or a prostitute or a drug fiend or a thief or a drunkard.

They look like boarding school or high school girls, as they bend over their desks in the school room of the Magdalen Home at Inwood, or play basketball in the gymnasium or go about their work in the kitchen or the laundry. They *are* like boarding school or high school girls, now that they have been mothered for a year in the home. Perhaps that is all that most Magdalens need, just mothering. Anyhow, the records show that it is true of these younger ones. Of the 100 the mothers of 32 died before the girls were 10 years old; 31 others came without their mothers to America before they were 18; and the mothers of the great majority of the others were drunkards or feeble-minded, or so hard-worked that they had no time to look after the children.

Eighty-five years ago the Magdalen Home was founded for girls who hadn't been able to find mothering elsewhere in two little hired rooms on an upper floor in Carmine street. Three thousand dollars and a mortgage enabled it to get out in the country, up on Eighty-eighth street, between Fourth and Fifth avenues. It sold this property for $168,000, bought another home at Riverside Drive and One Hundred and Thirty-ninth street for $35,000, sold it for $312,700, and moved to Inwood-on-the-Hudson, where it is to-day. It has kept itself alive by sheer business acumen, and has never asked the public for a Christmas gift until now.

"I am going to give you another chance," Judge Barlow said to a 17-year-old girl in night court, about a year ago. "I am going to give you the very best chance I know anything about. I am going to send you to the Magdalen Home."

That was Greta. Her lover had sent her the money to come from Russia to marry him. He had put her on the street to make money for him, just as she came from the steerage, with her pink, peasant cheeks and her shy eyes. She still believed that he was to marry her.

She came to the Magdalen Home, and listened stolidly as its gates were locked behind her. In the reception room she was greeted with a smile—the first time any one had smiled at her in that way in America. Then she was given a bath and a new dress, and put at a table with other girls at dinner. They were the first other girls she had talked to in America.

Miss Janet Macconachie, the superintendent of the house, has a unique system of discipline. When she finds a girl particularly in need of encouragement, or one who is working especially hard with her lessons or her household tasks in the home, Miss Macconachie gives her some small trinket, usually a bit of jewelry. Greta was given a gold ring, and that gold ring gave her back her self-respect. As one of the honor girls of the home, she will lead the carol singing procession of Magdalens to the holiday exercises in the chapel on Christmas morning.

Another girl in the Home, an undersized child of 16, whose mentality has been found to be that of a youngster of 8, came there with a bundle from which she had refused to be parted in night court. When it was taken from her and opened it was found to contain a doll. She wouldn't talk about it; they never found out whether or not it was her own doll or where she was taking it. Anyhow, though, there you are; a Magdalen with a doll.

At the other end of the Christmas morning procession will be Rosie, not 2, the only member of the 19 babies of the mothers' ward old enough to take part in a parade. The Magdalen Home is the only private institution in New York to which a woman under commitment may come and bring her child. The baby ward has been one of the most valuable means of raising the standard of deportment throughout the Home, Miss Macconachie says.

As a Christmas present this year, the girls are being given the gift of self-government. A council made up of their own number and elected by themselves decides upon measures of discipline or of punishment. Real courts with real witnesses and real judges sit gravely upon all offences against the self-made law. The one difficulty, Miss Macconachie finds, is that the council is so much more severe than she would be. A girl who was heard swearing was sentenced into what they call The Silence for a week. None except the matrons or the teachers was to talk to her or to listen to her for a week. A mother who vowed that she hated her baby, little brat, was banished from the mothers' ward until her tears won her permission to come back again.

There are other gifts that Miss Macconachie, Mrs. Paddon, executive secretary; Mrs. Irwin H. Cornell, the president, and the other women who have worked with the girls so long, are anxious to bring them. They want to give the Home the gift of a new name. They want cottages for the girls to live in, where each girl can have her own room. They want to keep the institution alive, a place to mother wayward girls.

These gifts depend, of course, upon the answers the night court judges get to their letters to Santa Claus. A friend of the Home has promised it $5,000 as a New Year's present, provided $15,000 has been raised by that time.

"We are facing a deficit which has averaged over $6,000 a year for the past few years," Mrs. Paddon said, in explanation of the first plea the Home has ever made for help. "There is nothing we do now which we can leave undone. There is much that we ought to do. Our girls, particularly those with babies, need the training and discipline, the rebuilding of health and of character, which they receive at the Home. They need the kindly supervision of parole after they leave us while they are establishing themselves again in community life.

"We send them out ready for work and for life. We want to keep on doing it. We need Christmas presents of real money to help us do it."

Checks may be sent to the treasurer of the New York Magdalen Home, Mrs. Henry R. Freeland, of 604 Riverside Drive.

A Christmas Castle at Inwood-on-the-Hudson.

(See article "The Night Court to Santa Claus" on this page.)

TAKING A FLIER IN MATRIMONY

Continued from Page One

the way it kept going, while The Pirate grinned wider and wider, and I became increasingly glum. The cheapest thing in the whole stock was a chauffeur at $300; but then, I haven't any automobile.

"This is perfectly absurd and awful!" I declaimed, indignantly. "If a man can get married without money, why can't a woman?"

The Pirate and the marriage vender looked at each other and smiled a superior sort of smile, the way men do when a woman presumes to infer that her sex is on a sort of a footing of equality with the other.

"Abroad the young girl always brings a dot," the brisk man said. "American girls often—er—contribute some money when they marry a nobleman."

"So there's no reason why you shouldn't bring a dot when you dash into matrimonial agency nobility," said The Pirate smartly.

I said that it wasn't fair, and I said that it wasn't feministic, and I said that when women got the ballot they would certainly make a new law establishing equal price wife and husbands. The marriage vender called my attention to the fact that I still had the farmer and the any-nationality gentleman, and possibly a number of others, to choose from. Perhaps the high cost of living had influenced the cost of husbands, he admitted. But meanwhile——

"Meanwhile, I see how it is; I can't afford a husband," I said, sadly, and bowed my head to the inevitable.

The Pirate chuckled all the way home, and said what a good story this would make to tell when he got back out West. That is why I have to tell it first.

The Congressional Record-Breakers

By IRWIN EDMAN

NOW that Congress has been open two weeks, it seems fitting to enlighten the conscientious citizen on the season's prospects for this cherished American institution. Every one knows, of course, in a general way, that a committee has been appointed to report, on expert statistical evidence, that the cost of living is high, and even the most uninitiated realize how bitter party feeling will run on the proposed radical legislation for a two-and-a-half cent piece. But the sinuous inside workings, the political labyrinths that must be threaded for a clear insight into the day's news—of these things the layman is wofully innocent. While I am not myself expert, I feel peculiarly qualified to draw the veils from the most secret counsels of the nation. I have been re-reading "The Congressional Record," and have been going over with great care the letters our Congressman sends me from time to time.

All I know about the great doings in Washington I learn entirely from the personal attentions of the Representative from my district. He writes in a spirit of friendly confidence vast national secrets that I might live a lifetime and never know. Besides which he sends me back numbers of "The Congressional Record," free of charge, in which I find many surprising items that never seem to be reported in any other publication. It's very decent of him, for if it weren't for his ministrations I should miss all the important proceedings of the season. There are committees of which he has been chairman that never get into the papers; he attends meetings of such crucial character that the President evidently thinks it better for the public not to be told about it just yet. Some of the speeches that he makes take up reams and reams in "The Congressional Record," and provoke, in parentheses at the end of every paragraph (*prolonged laughter and applause.*)

In the first place, it must be pointed out, if my Congressman is at all typical, that the fathers at Washington undertake too much. Consider my Representative. Not only does he watch with unfaltering devotion the interests of the district—never was a shepherd or his secretary more careful of his flock—but he looks with cosmic vision beyond the lampposts that bound his constituent lambs. He promised his district just two or three weeks ago that, despite the petty worries of rivers and harbors, eggs and railroads, he would never forget the principles of

(a) American freedom,
(b) Humanity,
(c) Eternal Justice.

He would continue, as ever, to battle for the right as he saw it, whatever his chances of re-election. Inclosed his district would please find a speech about the conditions of the native population in Patagonia.

This speech is a good example, not only of my Congressman's eloquence, but of the whole temper of the House. It shows the great, deep heart of America triumphing over the post-office appropriations and ringing with splendid challenges. It quotes feelingly from the Gettysburg Address, Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution, the State Archives and the collected works of Felicia Hemans. It moves richly and variously from puncture to puncture of laughter and applause. There are, it is true, moments in it when, had I been present, I should have wept, but in the galleries of Congress and in the Government Printing Office one can only laugh or applaud. Out of a sense of decorum one restrains one's tears.

My Congressman never promised new subtreasuries in his little notes, but I trust him implicitly, and know that the leaders can depend on him in a critical juncture. A man who has vision enough to sense the needs of the people in Patagonia will not be blind to the æsthetic demands of the folks in his own district.

Some Congressmen less gifted than my Representative, lacking the initiative to introduce bills, only make motions; there are one or two who specialize on motions for rollcalls, and some who dedicate themselves to the vital task of making motions to adjourn. One lawmaker hopes to make a reputation among his constituents this session by adhering loyally to a political doctrine which has not of late years received much editorial attention. This Representative will, it appears, steadfastly make motions for recess and adjournment; and while he expects considerable opposition from the conservative wings of both parties he feels sure that the radicals will sympathize with his plans.

All these Paramount Issues threaten to crowd out the persistent evils that call for remedy. Buried in the back numbers of "The Congressional Record" are the urgent bills for the widows of the veterans of the Second Seminole Indian War. There are thousands of postoffices crying to be built, and a whole session ought to be devoted to the report of the Committee on Mileage, which threatens in the minds of some Congressmen to eclipse such trifles as railway legislation and the cost of food.

My Representative assures me that as minority member of the Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Disposal of Useless Executive Papers he will steadfastly look after my interests, and hints—though he does not say so directly—that he may be able to arrange for me a postoffice or a sub-treasury or a pension of my own.

So crowded is Congress with the activities of my Representative on behalf of the apartment dwellers of the district, and with the statesmanlike activities of his colleague from Florida, who wants a fish hatchery and fish culture station established at Pakatcha, that the tariff and the railroad legislation will barely get a hearing. But the postoffices will be built and the sub-treasuries sought, and the millions of widows of the Second Seminole War will be ultimately cared for. It is a hard session for all involved, including the Committee on the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians, but it is sure to end next March in happy parentheses (*laughter and applause*).